



# News Release

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## **STATE HEALTH DIRECTOR ANNOUNCES CONFIRMED CASE OF WEST NILE VIRUS**

SACRAMENTO--Laboratory test results have confirmed that a Los Angeles County woman was infected with the West Nile virus, State Health Director Diana M. Bontá, R.N., Dr.P.H., announced today. The woman, whose infection with the virus was initially described as "probable," is the first reported case of West Nile virus acquired in California. The results of the confirmatory laboratory tests conducted at the University of California at Davis were reviewed by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which is confident that the test results are valid. These tests ruled out the possibility of infection by closely related viruses, such as St. Louis encephalitis.

"Typically, an individual is exposed to West Nile virus through the bite of an infected mosquito," Bontá said. "It is likely that this individual acquired the virus in the same manner. However, our investigation continues."

The woman became ill on Aug. 10 and was hospitalized on Aug. 12. She was diagnosed with aseptic meningitis and has fully recovered. Although she reports no mosquito bites, blood transfusions or organ transplants, or travel to areas where West Nile virus has been detected, laboratory tests confirm that she has been exposed to West Nile virus.

"The test results were unequivocal," Bontá said.

With the arrival of West Nile virus in California, mosquito surveillance and control efforts are being increased. Public health officials throughout the state are intensifying surveillance for the virus in humans, horses and birds.

West Nile virus, which can cause encephalitis, was first detected in the United States in New York in 1999 and has been found in 43 states and the District of Columbia. Most individuals who are infected with West Nile virus have only mild symptoms such as fever, headache and body aches. However, the virus can cause severe symptoms in the elderly and individuals with lowered immune systems.

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Bontá emphasized that the risk of any individual becoming ill from the bite of a mosquito infected with West Nile virus is very low. Less than 1 percent of the bites from infected mosquitoes can cause severe disease. The risk of disease is higher for individuals 50 years of age and older.

Individuals can reduce their risk of mosquito-borne diseases by taking these precautions:

- Avoid activity outside when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dawn and dusk.
- When outdoors, wear long pants, long sleeve shirts and other protective clothing.
- Apply insect repellent according to label instructions.
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding.
- Contact your local mosquito and vector control agency if there is a significant mosquito problem where you live or work.

Many species of birds get infected and die from West Nile virus. Bontá asked the public to become part of the California Department of Health Services' (CDHS) extensive monitoring effort for the virus by reporting any crows, ravens, magpies and jays that have been dead for less than 24 hours. CDHS has established a toll-free line - 877-WNV-BIRD - for public reporting.

Additional information about West Nile virus in California can be found at <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/> or by calling the CDHS West Nile virus information line - 866-847-2246.